

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8705

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 4702

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FOR SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, JO, LE, EG, IR, SY

SUBJECT: MESSAGE FROM ASAD REGARDING LEBANON

REFS: (A) STATE 177829, (B) AMMAN 3751, (C) AMMAN 3753

(D) STATE 177846 (AMMAN 3761), (E) DAMASCUS 4639

1. AMMAN 3753 PARA 11 STRONGLY SUGGESTS IT WAS HUSSEIN'S RATHER THAN ASAD'S IDEA TO RELAY THE LATEST MESSAGE TO THE U.S. AS REPORTED DAMASCUS REFTEL, I LAST MET WITH KHADDAM THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 15. DURING THAT SESSION THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF SYRIAN CONCERNS ABOUT SOVIET PRESSURE ON SYRIA, MUCH LESS ANY HINT THEY WISHED TO PASS US A MESSAGE TO THIS EFFECT.

2. HUSSEIN'S SUGGESTION THAT WE DEAL DIRECTLY WITH ASAD, OR A CLOSE PERSONAL CONFIDANT, IS SOUND (REF D). SINCE I HAVE NO INDICATION ASAD SHARED HIS CONVERSATION WITH HUSSEIN WITH ANYONE ELSE, I BELIEVE ANY CONTACT I MAKE SHOULD BE EITHER PERSONALLY WITH THE PRESIDENT OR THROUGH PASSING A MESSAGE FROM YOU WHICH I WOULD TRANSMIT ORALLY THROUGH HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY DABBOUL. I WOULD BASICALLY PREFER TO WAIT FOR ASAD TO REACT TO YOUR MESSAGE (REF A). BUT BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE WITH ASAD, WE WILL IN ANY CASE LIKELY FIND OURSELVES IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO PUSH HIM TO TELL US WHAT EXACTLY IS ON HIS MIND AND HOW WE MIGHT BE HELPFUL.

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KI CONFESS I AM TROUBLED BY THE PATTEN OF HUSSEIN'S MESSAGES

ABOUT ASAD. FIRST HE REPORTS ASAD AS DEEPLY DISTURBED ON ONE POINT OR ANOTHER. AFTER WE REACT, HE REPORTS THAT HE HAS FOUND THE PRESIDENT IN HIS NEXT CONTACT TO BE MUCH CALMER.)

3. IN CONSIDERING STEPS WE COULD TAKE SUPPORTIVE OF ASAD, I SUBMIT THAT OUR PRINCIPAL AIM SHOULD BE TO HELP HIM "ARABIZE" HIS POLICY TOWARDS LEBANON AND THE PALESTINIANS. HE COULD BENEFIT IN PARTICULAR FROM MORE POSITIVE EGYPTIAN SUPPORT BUT ANY ACTION WE MIGHT TAKE TO HELP BRING THIS ABOUT SHOULD BE ONLY AFTER TELLING ASAD WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND.

4. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO COUNSEL SADAT AND FAHMY TO SUPPORT ASAD BY INTERDICTING USE OF EGYPTIAN FACILITIES FOR ARMS SHIPMENTS DESTINED FOR THE LEFTISTS/PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON? I KNOW FAHMY HAS IN EFFECT DENIED SUCH INVOLVEMENT, BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE WEIGHT OF INTELLIGENCE REPORTING BELIES HIS PROFESSIONS OF INNOCENCE. I CAN UNDERSTAND THE BITTERNESS CAIRO STILL FEELS TOWARDS DAMASCUS BECAUSE OF THE LATTER'S ATTACK ON SINAI II. PERHAPS WE COULD ENCOURAGE THE EGYPTIAN LEADERSHIP TO PONDER WHETHER WHAT MAY NOW BE AT STAKE, A SIGNIFICANT WEAKENING OF THE SOVIET ME ROLE, IS NOT FAR MORE IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF US, INCLUDING THE EGYPTIANS, THAN ANY FURTHER GRATIFICATION THEY MIGHT DERIVE FROM ASAD'S EMBARRASSMENT VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIANS.
MURPHY

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